

May 25

Proverbs 14-15, 17-18, 25, 27, 29-31

Today we're going to look at two contributing writers at the very end of the book of Proverbs. One is Agur. We don't know a lot about him. He's not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. The other is King Lemuel. Some scholars think that King Lemuel could be Solomon himself, but we are uncertain if that's the case. What we do know, is that both of them have wise words and good insights.

The words of Agur are mostly contained in Ch. 30. You'll see that he uses a lot of illustrations from nature. He uses the raven, eagle, snake, ants, coneys, locusts, lizards, lions, rooster, goats. So, he makes a lot of references to exemplify good behavior and characteristics.

We also see that His instructions are very practical. He talks about contentment in verses 7-9. Agur touches on a lot of different topics, he touches on things like slander, pride, bad attitudes, discontent, disobedience.

At the end he warns us to be careful about our behavior. He says in vs. 32 **"If you have played the fool and exalted yourself, or if you have planned evil, clap your hand over your mouth!"** He warns us about pride and evil behavior and thoughts and that we should drastically prevent it.

So, first we have the saying of Agur. And now we have the saying of King Lemuel in Proverbs 31. So, breaking down Proverbs 31, in the beginning 10 verses, King Lemuel refers to snares for a young man. The first is an obsession with women and sex. **V. 3 "do not spend your strength on women, your vigor on those who ruin kings."** And the second is alcohol. **V. 4-7, "not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer" v. 7"let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more."** This is probably 3,000 years old but it's completely contemporary. Look at advertising today, mostly young beautiful women and alcohol. We see that both of these lead to ruin.

So, after that, in verses 10 on, we have probably the greatest and most famous depiction of a Godly woman in the bible. If you are a woman and you are revered to as a **"P 31"** model, then you are definitely being complimented. This is a well known model or pattern for women to follow.

Let's look at some of her characteristics. She is trustworthy. Her husband had full confidence in her. He can depend on her. She is dependable and faithful. She's always looking out for him. She's a hard worker. He never awakes before her, because she always awakens before him – she always gets up early to look out for her family. She's a woman who provides food for her family. She's a good cook. She considers a field and buys them – meaning, she makes wise decisions. She's resourceful. She finds ways to stretch her money - **"On her earning she is resourceful."** She figures out a way to enrich her household by resourcefulness. She's no wimp. Her arms are strong. She stays in shape. She keeps track of stuff – it

says, because she sees her tradings profitable. She plans ahead, she knows she has enough fuel that her lamp won't go out. She is clever at making things – she is crafty.

She has a heart of mercy and helpfulness – “she opens her arms to the poor.” She makes sure her family is well clothed. She makes her house look good. She is clothed in fine linen and in purple it says– meaning she looks good. She dresses well. “Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes a seat among the elders.” Her husband is respected – partly due to the greatness of his wife. She makes her husband look good.

She is effective at making money. She approaches the future with confidence – “she looks to the future with confidence.” She is wise. She says appropriate things. She speaks with wisdom – she has good advice. She doesn't sit around and watch tv all the time – it says “she doesn't eat the bread of idleness.” As a result of all of these things, her whole family is blessed and they praise her for her character.

In summary, King Lemuel says “many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.” What he's saying is – you're the best! He's recognizing what he is claiming that it surpasses all of the competition. I can see at this point a man may be in his 50's or 60's –looking at his wife and saying these words:

“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”

He realizing that surface beauty has no value compared to the beauty of this woman's character. The beauty of his wife's character. And this is the kind of character that brings honor to God and with that comes great reward.

The last verse says **“Give her the reward she has earned.”**

This is such a beautiful and fitting portrait to end the book of proverbs. It leads a lasting picture that is still a great model for both men and women to consider.

It was great to be with you today. May God build these characteristics into our lives.